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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Friday, August 25, 1944

Subject: "Will We Like Dehydrated Foods? Information from distribution officials of the War Food Administration.

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If someone were to ask you whether you are going to like dehydrated foods you'd probably tell that person that you could tell a lot more about it after you'd tasted some of them. Dehydrated foods for most of us are like the proverbial puddin', the proof of the puddin' is in the eating.

Some day, and we hope soon, you'll have a chance to taste some of the dehydrated foods. Homemakers in Chicago who have so far tasted and tested them have had some kind things to say. Their reception of eight dehydrated foods is so favorable that undoubtedly manufacturers will be encouraged to go ahead and manufacture some of them for civilians.

You know that wasn't true in World War I. We had some dehydrated foods during that war but the Armed Services thought so little of them that manufacturers didn't continue to manufacture.

But between wars the research men perfected the dehydrating process so that now we have better products and a greater variety of them. Now the production of dehydrated foods has jumped from 25 million pounds in 1941 to 225 million pounds this year. The manufacturers are wondering what they should do when the war and its demand for dehydrated foods is over...keep on dehydrating foods or go back to their old business. As we said, the homemakers in Chicago who were asked gave a favorable report on the products they were given to try. Investigators from the U.S. Department of Agriculture called on 450 typical homemakers in Chicago and gave each one of them enough of three different dehydrated foods for more than one meal. There were

directions for preparing the dehydrated foods and for making them into different dishes.

These homemakers were told that the representatives of the Department would be back in a couple of weeks with some questions.

Let's you and I see what answers these Department representatives got to their questions. The first one was whether housewives will be willing to buy dehydrated foods if they are made available.

The general answer to that question is yes. There was some variation between the different foods. From 55 to 90 percent of the women said they would buy some of the foods if they had a chance. If you were a manufacturer of dehydrated food you'd probably want to look closely at those answers because a good many people who are given anything have a feeling that they should report favorably on it. But the fact that over half of the women are willing to spend money for the foods in the future indicates that they think well of them.

Why are these women willing to buy dehydrated foods? Most of them said they would buy more if they had a chance because these dehydrated foods taste good. This second reason is one that appeals to housewives particularly. Dehydrated foods are easy to prepare.

Of course not all of the foods were equally popular. Dehydrated cranberries were the most popular....second, eggs...and third sweet potatoes. The others in their order of preference were beets, milk, carrots, diced potatoes and rice potatoes.

Of course there were some people who didn't think much of some of the foods. An example was some of the families which had not been accustomed to eating beets. Many of these families didn't think much of dehydrated beets.

On the other hand there were some strange findings. The outstanding example of that was in dried milk. Nearly one person out of every five said that he liked the reconstituted dried milk better than fresh. Another strange example was the

preference that was expressed for dehydrated cranberries. Maybe dehydrating does something to cranberries...as it does to apricots for example. Nearly a third of the the persons who tried them said they preferred the dehydrated cranberries to the fresh ones. Add to them the half of the housewives who thought the dehydrated cranberries were as good as the fresh ones and you'll see that four out of five housewives like the dehydrated cranberries as well or better than the fresh ones.

At the lower end of the list in the housewives preference were potatoes. Nearly half of the housewives said that they wouldn't use dehydrated potatoes.

There was just one more question the Department men were interested in having answered. That was about the nutritive value of the dehydrated foods. Between a third and a half of the housewives were of the opinion that there isn't much difference between the fresh foods and the dehydrated ones. Mostly the space saving quality of dehydrated foods have been emphasized and little said about their nutritive value.

You probably have the idea by now that this survey of the 450 homemakers in Chicago was encouraging to the people who are considering dehydrating food after the war. Half of the housewives say they are willing to buy dehydrated foods for the very good reasons that they like the dehydrated foods and find them easy to prepare.

The most popular of the eight dehydrated foods was cranberries. Next came eggs and third, sweet potatoes. One of the strange findings was that some people like reconstituted dried milk better than the fresh product.

All in all these 450 Chicago housewives gave dehydrated foods a pretty good report.

You're probably going to have a chance to give them a taste test yourself after the war is over. Between now and then you can look forward with pleasant expectation to that time.

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